Exhibits Overview

About the NIH Stetten Museum and Its Exhibits

The DeWitt Stetten Jr. Museum of Medical Research, established in 1986, preserves and interprets the material culture of the scientific work of the NIH. In conjunction with the broader Office of NIH History, the Stetten Museum collects biomedical research instruments, photographs, videos, journals, or oral histories, as well as objects related to the general history of the NIH, including architectural artifacts, artwork, and clothing.

Through onsite and online exhibits, the Stetten Museum brings these materials to life to inform the public of the breadth and significance of research performed at the NIH, the world's largest research entity dedicated to biomedical and behavioral research and training.

Our exhibits are displayed across the NIH Bethesda campus.

People

- **Christian Boehmer Anfinsen: Protein Folding and the Nobel Prize** — This exhibit celebrates Christian Anfinsen's discovery of how proteins work in the body and illuminates some of his contributions to science and society. Visit the real thing Anfinsen Exhibit Map.
- **Curiosity & Collaboration: The Work of Michael Potter** — This exhibit captures the spirit of Michael Potter, a man driven by curiosity, not competition, whose only goal was to answer questions about the nature of life. Visit the real thing Potter Exhibit Map.
- **Marshall Nirenberg: Discovering the Genetic Code** — The life of the Nobel-prize winning NIH scientist Nirenberg is presented in this exhibit. Nirenberg deciphered the genetic code in the early 1960s with the collaboration of his NIH colleagues. Visit the real thing Nirenberg Exhibit Map.
- **The Stadtman Way: A Tale of Two Biochemists at NIH** — This exhibit highlights the work of Drs. Thressa and Earl Stadtman, distinguished biochemists who worked at the NIH for over 50 years. Visit the real thing Stadtman Exhibit Map.
- **Santiago Ramon y Cajal: Founder of Modern Neuroscience** — Founder of Modern Neuroscience — Santiago Ramón y Cajal was the first to describe the nervous system, including neurons, in exquisite detail. This exhibit presents his drawings and information about current NIH neuroscience. The virtual exhibit is under construction, but you can visit the real thing [this would be a link to the map page].
- **Howard Bartner and 40 years of Medical Science** — Howard Bartner, an NIH medical illustrator, devoted 40 years to portraying human anatomy in his drawings.
- **Roscoe Brady & Gaucher Disease** — How medical researchers study diseases, by answering three basic questions. Focuses on Dr. Roscoe Brady's team at NINDS and their work with Gaucher disease.
- **Charles Darwin** — Formally titled “Rewriting the Book of Nature: Charles Darwin and the Rise of Evolutionary Theory,” the exhibit describes the Charles Darwin’s life and the fortunes of the theory of evolution by natural selection.
- **Martin Rodbell: How Cells Respond to Signals** — Martin Rodbell and his colleagues discovered a mechanism that transformed our understanding of how cells respond to signals. In a series of pioneering experiments conducted at the NIH, Rodbell studied hormones--substances which have specific effects on cells' activity. He won the 1994 Nobel Prize for this work.
- **The AMINCO-Bowman Spectrophotofluorometer** — In the 1950s, the NIH's Dr. Robert Bowman developed a sensitive instrument called the spectrophotofluorometer, or “SPF”, that allowed scientists to use fluorescence as a way to identify and measure tiny amounts of substances in the body. This exhibit explores the instrument and its use in scientific studies ranging from anti-depressant medication to AIDS research and the Human Genome Project.

Scientific and Biomedical Instruments and other "Things"

- **A History of the Pregnancy Test Kit** — This exhibit looks at the history of the home pregnancy test and examines its place in our culture. Research that led to a sensitive, accurate pregnancy test was done by scientists in the Reproductive Research Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the National Institutes of Health.
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- **Innovation and Invention: NIH and Prosthetic Heart Valves** — The development of artificial heart valves involved surgeons, engineers, patients, and regulators. This exhibit explores their stories and presents current and future examples of artificial heart valve innovation. The virtual exhibit is under construction.
- **Cray X-MP/22 Computer** — NIH's first supercomputer, the Cray X-MP/22, was the world's fastest supercomputer from 1983-1986, and the first one devoted solely to biomedical research. Both the physical and virtual exhibits are under development, but you can still see the Cray at its exhibit site by visiting the real thing [this would be a link to the map page].
- **Siemens 1-A Electron Microscope** — This Siemens 1-A Electron Microscope was used for over three decades by Dr. Albert Kapikian, NIAID. The instrument was used to detect and characterize various viruses. While the virtual exhibit is being constructed, you can Visit the real thing [this would be a link to the map page].
- **Varian A-60 NMR** — A Varian A-60 NMR (Nuclear Magnetic Resonance) was used at NIH in the 1960s to identify molecular structures and their reactions in relation to biomedical research. The virtual exhibit is under construction, but visit the real thing [this would be a link to the map page].
- **Early Computing at NIH** — This snapshot of some of the computing tools used in NIH labs highlights objects that are now in the NIH Stetten Museum collection.
- **Early Medical Instruments at the NIH** — A cross section of precision instruments used at NIH between 1945 and 1965 is presented.
- **Equal Arm Analytical Balances** — This type of balance is designed on a “seesaw” principle to measure mass precisely by placing a sample in one pan and a known weight in an opposing pan until an equilibrium was established.
- **Laboratory Instrument Computer (LINC)** — The story of one of the first supercomputers from its conception in MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, through its use in biomedical research laboratories.
- **Medical Posters** — A collection of 24 medical posters drawn by artists at the NIH, representing topics from arthritis to women's health.
- **The National Cancer Institute Real-Time Picture Processor** — The Real Time Picture Processor (RTPP) was one of the first special-purpose hardware computers developed for grayscale image processing and was designed to aid in biological image analysis.

Institutes and Ideas

- **Converging Pathways of Pain Research at NIDCR** — The story of how pain research evolved at NIDCR.
- **NIBIB: Improving Health Through Emerging Technologies** — This exhibit places some examples of cutting-edge research, funded by the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, in historical context. The virtual exhibit is under construction but you can visit the real thing [this would be a link to the map page].
- **Synthetic Opiates and Opioids** — The quest to free us from a dependence upon certain flowers by developing a synthetic source for morphine and codeine and the development of new painkillers is described. This work at NIDDK resulted in the NIH Total Opiate Synthesis method.
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